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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING




MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Michael P. Flanagan, Chairman

DATE: March 9, 2006 

SUBJECT: Approval of Process to Finalize Social Studies Grade Level Content Expectations

In July, the Social Studies Task Force presented the Social Studies Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCE) to the State Board of Education for approval, where it was decided that the GLCE needed additional consideration as well as a national review. The national review, done by Dr. John Patrick, was returned with recommendations in December of 2005.

Among Dr. Patrick's recommendations, he suggested that the department utilize content specific and scholarly expertise for the final editing steps. Therefore, in January of 2006 the Office of School Improvement, in conjunction with the chair of the Social Studies Task Force, convened a meeting of the leadership of the social studies content organizations to review and make necessary edits based on Dr. Patrick's recommendations. The role of the content specific scholarly work group aligns well with the curriculum work that is being done in developing content expectations for high school English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science.

One of the initial tasks for the work group was to review Dr. Patrick's recommendations, and to decide whether they would require minor editing adjustments to the content expectations and/or more significant restructuring of the standards and benchmarks. The commission of the original work group, as has been with all the content area work groups, was to identify content expectations within the framework of the established standards and benchmarks. This national reviewer is suggesting a wider range of changes, including some to the established standards and benchmarks that were adopted by the State Board of Education in July of 1995.

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Given the scope of the work ahead, the timeline for completion, and the protocols that have been established in the department for curriculum development and approval, it was decided that this smaller scholarly work group would revise, edit and finalize the Social Studies Grade Level Content Expectations in preparation for State Board approval. Since several members of the Task Force also serve as members of the Social Studies GLCE scholarly work group, the role of the Social Studies Task Force, as an "approval step," was called into question. It was suggested that smaller content-specific committees of social studies educators be convened to work on the documents and that the Social Studies Task Force, having appropriately served its commission to investigate student achievement on the Social Studies MEAP and to make recommendations for improving student achievement to the State Board of Education, be disbanded.

Therefore, we are requesting that the State Board of Education take the following actions:

- Recognize the foundational work done by the Social Studies Task Force in advancing rigorous learning expectations in the social studies and for providing a forum for deliberative discussion about strategies for increasing student achievement.
- Officially disband the Social Studies Task Force that was formed in June of 2004.
Direct the department to revise, when deemed necessary, the Social Studies Standards and Benchmarks in order to identify content expectations that meet national rigor and to proceed with the process to finalize the documents according to established protocol.